

HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Democratic Caucus

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Cuts in Park Service, Conservation Measures, and Pollution Control Await Labor Day Travelers

The President's Environmental Budget Cut in 2005, Cuts in 2006 on the Way

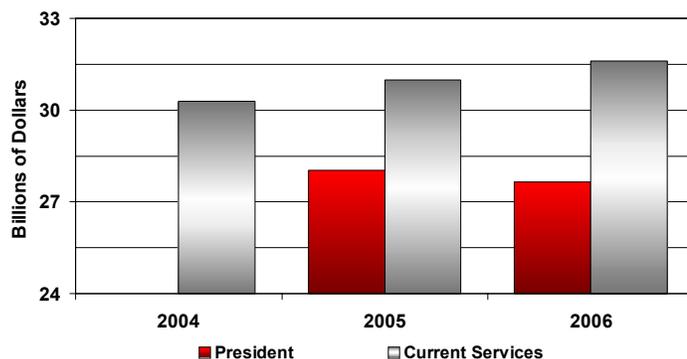
The Administration touts its commitment to clean air, clean water, and environmental preservation and conservation, but reality does not match the rhetoric. In yet another misplaced priority, the President's budget rejects vital investments in clean air, safe drinking water, and conservation measures which impact American families every day.

A May 19, 2004, White House memorandum confirms that, despite previous denials, the Administration is planning a 2006 budget that will impose cuts in key government services, including environmental protection, park service operations, and conservation.¹ The May 19th memorandum from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directs agencies to "[a]ssume accounts are funded at the 2006 level specified in the 2005 Budget database," a database that shows the spending levels in the President's budget for agencies and programs for 2005 through 2009.

In that budget, the President provides only \$28.0 billion in discretionary funds for environmental protection and conservation programs for 2005, a cut of over \$2.0 billion from the 2004 enacted level. Environmental programs would be reduced by another

President's Budget Undermines Environmental Protection

Function 300 Discretionary



¹For more information, please see the House Budget Committee Democratic staff analysis entitled, *Administration Confirms Its Plan to Cut Many Services Deeply in 2006*, on the Committee's website located at http://www.house.gov/budget_democrats/budget_facts/analyses/looming_cuts.pdf.

\$400 million for 2006. This would be the first time since 1981 that environmental programs would be cut in two consecutive years. Moreover, funding for 2006 will be \$3.9 billion *below* the level required to maintain current services. Simply stated, these cuts will shortchange our most pressing environmental protection and conservation needs, and jeopardize our most treasured resources.

According to the budget, these 2006 cuts will fall on both the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The OMB memorandum allows agencies to shift funding among agency programs as long as they abide by their overall 2006 funding limit. Thus, if one environmental priority is to be spared, another must be cut even further. However, if the cuts follow those specified in the budget database, the following are some of the examples of cuts that can be expected.

Recreation Cuts — National Park Service

The President's budget cuts funding for the National Park Service for 2006. The Parks budget will be cut to \$2.3 billion for 2006, a cut of \$41 million from the 2005 budget request. This will deprive the millions of Americans who visit our national parks of the natural beauty, educational experience, and overall enjoyment they seek. As part of these cuts:

- ***Park Service Operation Cuts*** — National Park Service operations are cut by \$41 million for 2006 from the 2005 budget request. Under the President's budget, 241 of the 388 park units would receive less funding for 2005 than they received for 2003, and the cuts for 2006 would surely increase this number.
- ***Operating Shortfall Not Addressed*** — According to some estimates, America's park system already suffers from an annual operating shortfall in excess of \$600 million, meaning, on average, parks operate with only two-thirds of needed funding. As a result, in many parks wildlife has gone unprotected, visitor centers have shortened their hours or closed entirely, school groups have been turned away, and theft and vandalism have increased.
- ***Pledge to Eliminate Maintenance Backlog Abandoned*** — During the 2000 campaign, President Bush promised to eliminate the \$4.9 billion maintenance backlog facing our national parks. However, only \$662 million in new money has been provided to address the backlog of deteriorating roads, unsafe buildings, and poorly maintained campgrounds and trails. Adding insult to injury, the Park Service has acknowledged that the maintenance backlog has increased and is now approaching \$6 billion.

Pollution Control Cuts — Environmental Protection Agency

The President's budget cuts EPA funding for 2005 by \$606 million (7.2 percent) from the 2004 enacted level to \$7.8 billion. Funding is cut by an additional \$150 million (1.9 percent) to \$7.6 billion for 2006, and will be nearly \$1.1 billion below the level required to maintain current services. As part of these cuts:

- ***“Polluter Pays” Principle Abandoned, Then Funding Is Cut*** — The President abandons the “polluter pays” principle regarding clean-up of the nation's most toxic sites and forces taxpayers to foot the entire bill in his budget. Even more worrisome, the Superfund program is actually cut for 2006 by \$32 million from the 2005 budget request at a time when 501 of the 1,349 non-federal Superfund sites await clean-up, and nearly 70 million Americans — including 10 million children — live within four miles of a Superfund site. The EPA Inspector General identified a funding shortfall of at least \$175 million in the Superfund cleanup program, slowing the pace of cleanup at 29 sites in 17 states.²
- ***Leading Source of Groundwater Contamination Not Addressed*** — Leaking Underground Storage Tank funding is cut by 3.9 percent for 2005 from the 2004 enacted level and by an additional 2.7 percent for 2006. There are currently 136,000 confirmed, but unaddressed, releases where leaking petroleum and MTBE are contaminating groundwater and drinking water supplies.
- ***Pollution Prevention Research Cut*** — Scientific research for pollution reduction is cut by \$93 million for 2005 from the 2004 enacted level (including the elimination of an EPA research program on decontaminating buildings attacked by toxins) and by an additional \$15 million for 2006.
- ***Clean Water and Drinking Water Needs Ignored*** — The Clean Water State Revolving Fund is provided only \$850 million for 2005, a cut of nearly \$500 million from the 2004 enacted level of \$1.3 billion; funding is frozen at \$850 million for 2006. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund also receives only \$850 million for 2005, a \$5 million increase from the 2004 level but \$4 million below the level needed to maintain current services; funding is similarly frozen for 2006.³ Analyses have found that the nation faces huge unmet needs to maintain existing water infrastructure and to build new infrastructure where needed. Absent an adequate federal investment, the country will continue to fall behind in its commitment to clean water.

²Both Superfund figures are as of the end of fiscal year 2003.

³For more information, please see the House Budget Committee Democratic staff analysis entitled, *Bush Administration Does Not Adequately Address Clean Water and Drinking Water Needs*, on the Committee's website located at http://www.house.gov/budget_democrats/budget_facts/analyses/adequate_water.pdf.

Conservation Cuts — Department of Interior

The President's budget also cuts funding for the Department of Interior (DOI) for 2006. The DOI budget will be cut to \$10.6 billion for 2006, a cut of \$244 million (2.2 percent) from the 2005 budget request. This is \$547 million below the level required to maintain current services. As part of these cuts:

- ***Broken Promise to Fully Fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)*** — The President once again claims to meet his pledge to fully fund the LWCF at the authorized level of \$900 million. In reality, \$314 million is provided for 2005 and only \$308 million is provided for 2006 for the intended LWCF purposes of preserving parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and open space.
- ***Reduced Forest Protection*** — Funding for the National Forest System is cut by \$42 million for 2006 from the 2005 budget request. The President does not fully fund his Healthy Forests Initiative for 2005, providing only \$476 million of the \$760 million authorized for hazardous fuel reduction. Therefore, it is safe to assume that, due to the National Forest System cut, funding for hazardous fuel reduction will fall far short for 2006 as well.